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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PHNOM PENH 000399

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STATE FOR CA/OCS/ACS, EAP/EX, EAP/MLS, G/AIAG, MED
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HHS FOR STEIGER AND OGHA ELVANDER
CDC FOR NCID COX
USAID FOR ANE/AA KUNDER, GH/HIDN CARROLL, OFDA LEVY
BEIJING FOR ESTH - SELIGSOHN AND SHAPIRO
BANGKOK FOR CDC MALISON AND CHONG, USAID FOR BRADSHAW, MED
FOR MCCOY
JAKARTA FOR NAMRU BLAIR, USAID KRAMER
HANOI FOR USAID ZVINAKIS, HHS IADEMARCO AND DENNIS
VIENTIANE FOR BAUER AND CORWIN
RANGOON FOR TIDWELL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [CASC](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR MARFORPAC PANDEMIC/AVIAN INFLUENZA
TEAM

Classified By: Jennifer Spande for reason 1.4 (b)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. While fully normal relations between the United States and Cambodia have eluded both countries since diplomatic relations began more than a half century ago, the bilateral relationship has improved markedly over the last few years. Cooperation is particularly close on security and health issues, such as counter-terrorism and intel-sharing, POW/MIA matters, HIV/AIDS, and avian influenza. Cambodia has made significant strides in veterinary and human avian influenza (AI) surveillance and has developed an AI preparedness plan. While mil-mil ties have deepened considerably in the past 18 months, including with the first US navy ship visit in 30 years, US cooperation with the Cambodian military pales in comparison to assistance from Vietnam and China. The embassy continues to press the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) on efforts to fight corruption and to improve its human rights and political openness record. END SUMMARY.

Avian/Pandemic Influenza Preparations in Cambodia

12. (U) In Cambodia, the first human cases of H5N1 influenza were detected in 2005 when four human cases were identified and all resulted in death. Most recently in March 2006, two additional human cases were found, bringing the total number of human infections to six, all of them fatal. Over the past 3 years, the Ministry of Agriculture has investigated, intervened, and reported to the international community more than 23 significant bird mortality outbreaks due to H5N1. The H5N1 virus is widely circulating amongst domestic and free range poultry. The current AI situation in Cambodia remains at a WHO Phase 3 status.

13. (U) Cambodia has responded to this problem by developing an emergency pandemic preparedness plan which intends to not only prepare for a pre-pandemic status but also a pandemic (Phase 4) level alert. The Prime Minister has appointed the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) as the lead ministry for coordinating the implementation of the National Comprehensive Pandemic Plan within all government ministries.

The lead technical agencies include the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ministry of Health (MOH). Cambodia has made considerable strides in the enhancement of both the veterinary and human AI surveillance and early warning systems from the national to the village level. Additionally, there is an incredible multi-media information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign. USG agencies, the UN, and other donors have contributed substantial technical and financial support to the RGC toward developing the pandemic early warning surveillance systems and disease outbreak and containment capacity.

Growing Mil-Mil Ties

14. (C/REL AUS NATO) The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) remains an ineffective force that suffers from being the legacy of the factional reconciliation which ended the civil war in the early 90's. It was created to amalgamate the armed forces of all contending groups and enable subsequent demobilization. Some demobilization occurred in the 90's. The RCAF has recently recommenced this effort, demobilizing 7000 personnel in calendar year 2006 funded by internal government resources. However, it is still top heavy, with over 700 generals in a force nominally of around 107,000, and actually (discounting ghost soldiers and age/health ineffective soldiers) less than 60,000. Within the nominal force, the Army is overwhelmingly predominant, followed by the Gendarmerie, Navy and Air Force. Its equipment is primarily aging Warsaw Pact material, much of which is non-operational. The Defense budget has averaged around less than US 70 million for the last several years, but was increased to USD 78 million for 2007. The basic pay for a soldier is around USD 25 monthly, and even generals receive

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less than USD 400 monthly. Military personnel survive through additions to their salary for occupying particular positions, through corruption, and (for many lower and mid-ranking personnel) taking second and even third jobs, which results in their rarely being present for duty. The major exception is the B70 Brigade, the only unit located in Phnom Penh, which serves as the regime protection unit and includes the Prime Minister's personal bodyguard.

15. (C/REL AUS NATO) The RCAF conducts foreign defense cooperation with a variety of countries with and outside the region, including (in order of assessed value) Vietnam, China, Australia, France, the US, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and India. China and Vietnam are the major players, with programs in excess of USD 3 million annually each, and are generally in competition with each other for influence. For the Royal Cambodian Navy, this meant that the Chinese agreement to provide a USD 60 million no interest loan to increase maritime capability over time resulted in Vietnam--in very short order--donating two ocean going patrol ships and providing operational funding for quarterly joint maritime patrols/training exercises.

16. (SBU) Mil-mil cooperation between the RGC and USG has been expanding dramatically in the last 18 months. The initial increase was the result of consultations with Congress in 2004. As remaining sanctions have been allowed to expire, cooperation has grown rapidly. As a result, for example, while Cambodia received no FMF in 2004, it received USD 992,000 at the end of FY05 and USD 990,000 at the end of FY06, and in the FY07 Continuing Resolution is earmarked for an additional USD 1 million. Cambodia became eligible for IMET for the first time in FY06 (with a modest sum) and the focus has been on increasing English language instruction capability and establishing some US style defense cooperation management capability. As you are aware, when COMPACOM visited Cambodia last year, he committed PACOM to support this expansion--both with inherent PACOM resources and in the overall budget process. He directed deployment of an assessment team to work with Cambodia to develop a long term

program. This has resulted in a joint agreement for US efforts in Cambodia to focus on English language training, building capacity on border control, counter narcotics, counter-terrorism, mobility, and participation in international peacekeeping operations. The RCAF does have a naval ground component but it is so small and poorly supported by the Cambodians that putting resources towards building capacity there is not supported by the Country Team, nor is it part of the joint PACOM/RCAF long term plan.

¶17. (SBU) Recognizing the limited resources available, MARFORPAC may want to consider engagement in specialty areas, and look at medical, EOD, or engineering. Humanitarian Assistance activities, such as the medical clinic constructed by the Marines in Kampong Chhnang in 2005, would provide the greatest overall support to the Mission. We hope your proposal for both an ENCAP and a MEDCAP this summer is still on track. Work with the government on AI/PI has been primarily done through the Centers for Disease Control and USAID. We look forward to our discussion on 17 March focusing on AI/PI. We would appreciate examining your proposal for a SMEER, as it is not clear to us that this would not duplicate efforts already conducted.

Cambodia Matures as an International Actor

¶18. (SBU) Since reestablishing diplomatic relations in 1992 following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, the U.S. and Cambodia have incrementally but steadily strengthened their ties, albeit with occasional setbacks as a result of Cambodian human rights transgressions. The momentum of this deepening relationship has increased in recent years and Cambodia has begun taking a more responsible position in international affairs. The RGC has sent peacekeepers to Sudan (a company of de-miners), supported Guatemala's bid for

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the UNSC seat and taken a more publicly critical stance on Burma.

Keeping Political Space Open, Human Rights Are Priorities

¶19. (SBU) The level of political violence in Cambodia has fallen since the early 1990s, but there remain serious concerns regarding human rights and democratization. Like other countries in the region, Cambodia's leaders have used its weak and easily influenced judiciary to pursue legal cases against critics and the political opposition. For example, many see the current breach of trust case against Prince Norodom Ranariddh as an attempt to discredit his newly formed political party before the upcoming local elections. The PM has had a very public falling out with the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights for Cambodia, Kenyan constitutional lawyer Yash Ghai, due to what the PM considers as unduly harsh criticism of the human rights situation in Cambodia. International observers will closely monitor the local commune council elections scheduled for April 1, 2007 and the national elections in summer 2008. Cambodia's previous three national elections have shown improvement during each five-year cycle, with diminishing levels of political violence, but intimidation and vote-buying continue to be problematic.

Corruption Remains Endemic

¶10. (SBU) In 2006, Transparency International ranked Cambodia 151 out of 163 countries in its corruption perceptions index; Burma was the only country in Asia ranked lower than Cambodia. There has been continued and widespread land grabbing by government officials and the politically well-connected. Enactment of an anti-corruption law has dragged on for years, with the government showing little inclination to adopt legislation that would lead to strong

enforcement. Rather than embrace the reforms that would garner increased investment and the new jobs that would be created, some in the RGC appear to be banking on the future income from its as-yet-untapped oil and gas reserves, which should come on stream after 2009. Donors are concerned that the current corrupt political environment could lead to misuse of future revenues that are badly needed to reduce poverty in the country.

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